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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 003591

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DEPT. FOR PM AND L

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/21/2015

TAGS: PREL MOPS MARR IT NATO FORCES IN ITALY

SUBJECT: ITALY: CHOD CALLS SIGONELLA TA "ABSOLUTE NECESSITY" TO CONTINUING U.S. OPERATIONS ON BASES IN ITALY

REF: ROME 2179

Classified By: DCM Anna Borg. Reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶11. (C) In an October 19 meeting with visiting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Daniel Fata, Italian Chief of Defense ADM Di Paola said that concluding the Sigonella Technical Arrangement in the near future was "an absolute necessity." Di Paola said that, if there were to be a change of government in Italy following next April's elections, without a signed Sig TA it would become impossible politically for the U.S. to continue operating with the relatively free hand that we now have on Italian bases. Di Paola emphasized that the Sig TA was needed as a framework to show that the U.S. understands that its forces are operating on Italian territory, respect Italian sovereignty, and are on Italian bases because this is mutually beneficial to our countries, as friends and Allies. To underscore his point, Di Paola alluded to Sicilian novelist Guiseppe Lampedusa, saying "something has to change" (i.e., the Sig TA must get signed) "in order for nothing to change" (i.e., U.S. operations on Italian bases continue unfettered).

¶12. (C) As Post urged in Reftel, to preserve our excellent mil-mil relationship and to ensure continuing unfettered operations for U.S. forces on bases in Italy, we should do everything we can to get the Sig TA approved for signature before the next U.S.-Italy Joint Military Commission (JMC) meeting, scheduled for Nov. 16-17. The Italian Defense General Staff will require several days to staff the Sig TA for Italian approval for signature. Therefore, we strongly urge that final approval be given by the U.S. within the next few weeks, and at least a week in advance of the November JMC.

¶13. (U) DASD Fata has cleared this message.

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